

## SOURCES OF LOVE AND KATE

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admission of the psychological facts which psycho-analysis has revealed, marks a very great advance in the scientific accuracy and dispassionateness of the academic text-books.

This most significant chapter in the child's psychological history is now beginning to gain admittance to the closed pages of academic teaching on mental development.

### 6. MASTURBATION

Only one instance of masturbation is recorded as occurring in the school, and that for a quite short period. As I pointed out in my introductory chapter, this has no bearing upon the actual incidence of the practice in small children, but throws some light upon its psychology. When playing actively with other children under supervision, only those children who are at the moment under great mental stress are likely to have recourse to masturbation. I have on one occasion seen a little girl in a large class in an infants' school engaged in the act while seated at her desk; but that is quite uncommon. It is this psychological fact which has led some observers (e.g. Katherine Bridges, quoted on p. 154) to underrate the frequency of masturbation in childhood, and to believe that it is commoner in boys than in girls. In so far as it does occur under group conditions, it would more readily occur with boys, for various reasons; e.g. the boy's clothes make his genital more accessible, the boy's type of masturbation with the hand is more readily resorted to in ordinary postures than the girl's characteristic type, boys are in any case bolder, more aggressive and less secretive than girls. The general experience of psycho-analysts and psychiatrists is, however, that masturbation is actually

more frequent and more commonly of a compulsive type in little girls than in little boys. The evidence gathered from parents and nurses which I am myself able to quote (see pp. 147-151) definitely confirms this.

I have used the single case occurring in the school as an occasion to quote rather fully from the many cases of masturbation I have had reported to me by mothers and nurses, because it seems very important that it should be widely realised that masturbation does frequently occur in early childhood amongst both boys and girls, and amongst children who nevertheless grow up quite happily and satisfactorily. It is important that this should be known, both because of